

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02  
SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 AID-05 /089 W  
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R 200045Z JAN 78  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8918  
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY RANGOON  
AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIAKE 0081

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PBOR CB VM  
SUBJECT: VIETNAMESE-CAMBODIAN CONFLICT

REF: VIENTIANE 0066

SUMMARY: BURMESE CHARGE KYAW ZAW TOLD US JANUARY 19  
THAT BOTH THE CAMBODIAN AND VIETNAMESE ENVOYS IN  
VIENTIANE HAD TOLD HIM THAT ALL VIETNAMESE TROOPS HAD  
LEFT CAMBODIA, ECEPT, ACCORDING TO THE CAMBODIAN, SOME  
STILL IN RATTANAKIRI. KYAW ZAW SAID HE THOUGHT THAT  
THE RECENT FLARE-UP WAS THE RESULT OF (1) A CAREFULLY  
PLANNED TEMPORARY PUNITIVE INCURSION BY GENERAL GIAP,

AND (2) A CAMBODIAN PUBLIC RELATIONS AND DIPLOMATIC  
EFFORT TO MAKE HANOI LOOK BAD DURING FOREIGN MINISTER  
TRINH'S VISIT TO ASEAN CAPITALS. END SUMMARY.

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1. IN THE COURSE OF A JANUARY 19 COURTESY CALL, BURMESE  
CHARGE KYAW ZAW TOLD US OF CONVERSATIONS HE HAD HAD  
WITH THE CAMBODIAN AMBASSADOR AND THE VIETNAMESE CHARGE  
IN VIENTIANE.

2. THE CAMBODIAN HAD GIVEN KYAW ZAW THE SAME DOMINO  
LINE THAT HE HAD GIVEN OTHER ASIAN ENVOYS: CAMBODIA WAS

IN THE FRONT LINE OF DEFENSE AGAINST THE VIETNAMESE EXPANSION WHICH THREATENED ALL OF SOUTHEAST ASIA. HE HAD SAID THAT VIET NAM WANTED TO REESTABLISH INDOCHINA AND DOMINATE THE WHOLE REGION. THE CAMBODIAN HAD SAID, HOWEVER, THAT ALL VIETNAMESE TROOPS HAD BEEN "DRIVEN" FROM CAMBODIA EXCEPT FOR A FEW POCKETS LEFT IN RATTANA-KIRI PROVINCE.

3. THE VIETNAMESE CHARGE HAD GIVEN KYAW ZAW THEIR STANDARD TALE OF CAMBODIAN PROVOCATIONS. HE, TOO, SAID THAT THERE WERE NO VIETNAMESE TROOPS LEFT IN CAMBODIA, BUT HE HAD USED THE TERM "WITHDRAWN". COMMENT: THESE STATEMENTS BY BOTH THE CAMBODIAN AND THE VIETNAMESE WOULD TEND TO CONFIRM THE JANUARY 17 STATEMENT BY THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR ON WHICH WE REPORTED IN VIENTIANE 0064 AND ON WHICH WE CAST ASPERSIONS IN VIENTIANE 0066. THE SOVIET HAD ALSO SAID THAT ALL VIETNAMESE TROOPS HAD LEFT CAMBODIA.)

4. KYAW ZAW SAID THAT AS A MILITARY MAN (HE IS A RETIRED COLONEL AND FORMER MILITARY ATTACHE IN WASHINGTON), HE HAD TRIED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE VIETNAMESE WERE TRYING TO DO AND HOW THEY HAD TRIED TO DO IT. HE SURMISED THAT THE VIETNAMESE MIGHT WELL HAVE TRIED TO ESTABLISH "NSS ECONOMIC ZONES" POPULATED BY FORMER SAIGONSSE IN BORDER AREAS AND THAT THE USUAL SORT OF LOCAL QUARRELS

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COULD HAVE ARISEN OVER FISHING RIGHTS AND TRADE. SKIRMISHING HAD BROKEN OUT AND HAD CONTINUED FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS. KYAW ZAW SAID THAT GIVEN GENERAL GIAP'S KNOWN PENCHANT FOR CAREFUL PLANNING, HE HAD PROBABLY BEEN MAKING PREPARATIONS FOR A SERIES OF PUNISHIVE RAIDS ("INCURSIONS"?) FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS. THE SOUPHANOUVONG VISIT IN LATE DECEMBER HAD BEEN A LAST EFFORT BY THE VIETNAMESE TO WARN THE CAMBODIANS OF WHAT WAS ABOUT TO HAPPEN AND TO TRY TO GET THEM TO CHANGE THEIR WAYS.

5. SOUPHANOUVONG'S MISSION HAD OBVIOUSLY FAILED, KYAW ZAW SAID, AND GIAP HAD LAUNCHED HIS ATTACK. KYAW ZAW SAID HE DOUBTED THAT GIAP HAD ANY INTENTION OF REMAINING INSIDE THE CAMBODIAN BORDER, SINCE THIS WOULD TIE HIM DOWN IN AN EXPENSIVE DEFENSIVE POSTURE. HE HAD WITHDRAWN ACCORDING TO PLAN AND WOULD NOW HOPE THAT THE CAMBODIANS WOULD HAVE LEARNED A LESSON.

6. PUTTING ON HIS DIPLOMAT'S HAT, KYAW ZAW THEN TRIED TO FIGURE OUT THE REASONS BEHIND THE DIPLOMACY OF THE CURRENT SITUATION. HE SAID THAT THE RECENT TRIP OF THE

VIETNAMESE FOREIGN MINISTER AROUND THE REGION COULD HAVE BEEN PART OF AN EFFORT TO MAKE A SHOW OF DIPLOMATIC STRENGTH FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CAMBODIANS. MORE LIKELY, HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO KYAW ZAW, WAS AN INTERPRETATION THAT IT WAS THE CAMBODIANS WHO HAD TAKEN THE DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVE. RATHER THAN SAY NOTHING ABOUT GIAP'S MOST RECENT INCURSION, AS THEY HAD DONE IN THE CASE OF FORMER BORDER CLASHES, PHNOM PENH SAW TRINH'S TRIP AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE HANOI LOOK FOOLISH. BY BREAKING RELATIONS AND MAKING A PUBLIC OUTCRY, THE CAMBODIANS COULD POINT OUT THAT DESPITE TRINH'S DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE AND FRIENDLY GESTURES TO VIET NAM'S NEIGHBORS, HANOI WAS NOT TO BE TRUSTED.

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7. KYAW ZAW AND WE AGREED THAT WITH THE CURRENT HIGH-LEVEL CHINESE VISIT TO PHNOM PENH, WITH THE PHAN HIEN VISIT TO PEKING, AND WITH THE CAMBODIAN AND VIETNAMESE ENVOYS BOTH MAINTAINING THAT ALL VIETNAMESE TROOPS HAD LEFT CAMBODIA, THE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATIONS TAKING PLACE WAS GOOD. THERE WAS, HOWEVER, ALWAYS THE CHANCE THAT THE CAMBODIANS COULD MAKE THEIR CLAIM OF A CONTINUED VIETNAMESE PRESENCE IN RATTANAKIRI AN EXCUSE NOT TO TALK.

8. MEMCON ON OTHER TOPICS BEING POUCHED.  
ROBERTS

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NNN

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